

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LIMA

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AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 12093

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: MASS MORG MPOL VE

SUBJ: PROPOSED REORGANIZATION OF NATIONAL GUARD AND
ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL POLICE FORCE

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE GOV HAS PROPOSED TO THE VENEZUELAN CONGRESS
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIFIED NATIONAL POLICE FORCE BY PLACING
THE PRESENT POLICE UNITS UNDER THE NATIONAL GUARD. THE NATIONAL
GUARD WOULD, IN TURN, BE REMOVED FROM THE SUPERVISION OF THE
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND PUT UNDER THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR,
ALTHOUGHT THE NATIONAL GUARD WOULD HAVE THE TITLES AND BENEFITS
FO THE REGULAR ARMED FORCES.

THIS PROPOSAL COULD REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT STEP BY PRESIDENT
PEREZ TO DIMINISH THE POLITICAL POWER OF THE ARMED FORCES
WHILE IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND QUALITY OF THE POLICE.
ANOTHER IMPLICATION OF THIS PROPOSAL IS THAT IT COULD LEAD
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TO ELIMINATION OF US FOREIGN

MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE NATIONAL GUARD. END SUMMARY

1. ON NOV 28 THE GOV SUBMITTED TO THE CONGRESS A "NATIONAL POLICE FORCE BILL." THEREBY CONFIRMING RUMORS CIRCULATING FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS THAT PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ PLANNED TO REORGANIZE THE NATIONAL GUARD. FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF THE BILL TO CONGRESS, LUIS PINERUA ORDAZ, THE INFLUENTIAL MINISTER OF INTERIOR, TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE GOV HAD DECIDED TO ESTABLISH A UNIFIED NATIONAL POLICE FORCE IN ORDER TO CENTRALIZE POLICE ACTIVITIES, PROVIDE BETTER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS POLICE SERVICES AND TO GIVE "GREATER COHERENCE" TO THE NATION'S POLICE SERVICES. THE BILL PROVIDES THAT OVER A TWO-YEAR PERIOD, STATE AND LOCAL POLICE FORCES WOULD BE ASSIMILATED BY THE NATIONAL GUARD, WHICH WOULD BE CHARGED WITH MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER. THE TRAFFIC POLICE, PRESENTLY UNDER THE COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY, WOULD ALSO BE ABSORBED INTO THE NATIONAL POLICE FORCE. SINCE ALL STATE, REGIONAL AND DISTRICT POLICE COMMANDERS ARE ALREADY NATIONAL GUARD OFFICERS ON DETACHED DUTY, THE MAJOR CHANGES WOULD OCCUR IN REPLACING OR ABSORBING RANK-AND-FILE POLICE OFFICERS.

2. THE TECHNICAL JUDICIAL POLICE (PTJ) AND THE GOVT SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE FORCE (DISIP) WOULD BE UNAFFECTED BY THE BILL AND WOULD NOT COME UNDER THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THE NATIONAL POLICE FORCE. (DISIP IS UNDER MINISTER OF INTERIRO AND PTJ UNDER JUSTICE.) THE BILL ALSO CONTAINS CERTAIN RULES OF CONDUCT FOR THE NATIONAL POLICE AND WOULD ESTABLISH, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR, A NATIONAL POLICE ACADEMY AND A NATIONAL POLICE COUNCIL.

3. ALTHOUGH IT WOULD REQUIRE TWO YEARS OR MORE TO PUT THIS LAW INTO EFFECT, IT COULD LEAD TO THE STREAMLINING AND GENERAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE VENEZUELAN POLICE FORCES. AT PRESENT, THERE ARE VARIOUS SEPARATE VENEZUELAN POLICE ORGANIZATIONS WHICH ARE POORLY COORDINATED AND POSSESS A LEVEL OF COMPETENCE AND TRAINING GENERALLY BELOW THAT OF THE NATIONAL GUARD. IN HIS REMARKS TO THE PRESS, PINERUA ORDAZ EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THIS REORGANIZATION WOULD ERADICATE THE "NOTORIOUS DEFICIENCEIS" OF THE STATE AND MUNICIPAL POLICE.

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4. A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL ASPECT OF THE PROPOSED NATIONAL POLICE FORCE IS ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE(MOD). THE NATIONAL GUARD IS PRESENTLY UNDER THE DIRECTION AND SUPERVISION OF THE MOD AND, IN ADDITION TO BEING BETTER PAID-- ALTHOUGH MORE LIGHTLY ARMED-- IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE BETTER TRAINED THAN THE REGULAR ARMY. UNDER THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION, ALTHOUGH THE NATIONAL GUARD WOULD HAVE THE SAME RANK, PROMOTION, RETIREMENT, AN JUDICIAL SYSTEMS AS THE ARMED FORCES, AND WOULD RETURN TO MOD

CONTROL DURING PERIODS OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY, THE NATIONAL GUARD WOULD OTHERWISE BE UNDER THE DIRECT SUPERVISION OF THE CIVILIAN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. ONE EFFECT OF THE BILL WOULD BE TO SHIFT 12,000 NATIONAL GUARDSMEN TO THE INTERIOR MINISTRY, WHICH WOULD REDUCE THE MANPOWER UNDER THE MOD BY 21 PERCENT, LEAVING A TOTAL OF 43,200 MEN IN THE ARMY,NAVY AND AIR FORCE. ANOTHER EFFECT WOULD BE TO GIVE THE PROSPECTIVE NATIONAL POLICE FORCE A ROUGH TOTAL OF 40,000 MEN, INCLUDING THE ADDITION OF THE 12,000 NATIONAL GUARDSMEN.

5. IN ADDITION TO STRENGTHENING THE POSITION OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND THE NATIONAL GUARD ITSELF, THSI PLAN WOULD ENHANCE PRESIDENT PEREZ'S ABILITY TO DEVELOP A COUNTER- BALANCE AGAINST THE MONOPOLY OF POWER PRESENTLY ENJOYED BY THE ARMED FORCES. SOME OFFICERS IN THE ARMED FORCES REPORTEDLY RESISTED THIS LEGISLATION, WHICH SOME MILITARY OFFICERS PREDICTED UNTIL RECENTLY WOULD NEVER REACH CONGRESS. (SOME OFFICERS HAVE ALSO CRITICIZED PEREZ'S PRACTICE OF GRADUALLY PLACING OFFICERS PERSONALLY LOYAL TO HIM IN SENIOR MILITARY POSITIONS.) IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT CONGRESS WILL PASS THE BILL WITOUT DIFFICULTY, SINCE IT WOULD TEND TO STRENGTHEN CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER A PORTION OF THE VENEZUELAN UNIFORMED SERVICES AS WELL AS IMPROVE THE POLICE SYSTEM.

6. THE EMBASSY CONSIDERS IT PREMATURE TO COMMENT ON THE IMPLICIATIONS OF THIS PROPOSED NEW LEGISLATION FOR CURENT US FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO THE VENEZUELAN NATIONAL GUARD (E.E., 3 OFFICER, 1 NCO, AND \$115,000 MAP TRAINING PROGRAMMED FOR FY 76 AND 77), PREFERRING TO AWAIT THE OUTCOME OF THE VENEZUELAN CONGRESS'S DELIBERATIONS ON THE BILL BEFORE SUBMITTING ITS VIEWS TO THE DEPT.
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